**You Claim You Always Knew What Was On My Mind**

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# You Claim You Always Knew What Was On My Mind

by Imanerdandliketoread

Summary


For the first time in his life, Will is happy. He has friends, an adoring partner, and he's not in prison (anymore). And, the weird, mental bond he has with his partner has helped him accept his more violent aspects.

There are roadblocks, though expected ones. For one, the man currently on trial for the Chesapeake Ripper murders is both innocent and has a decent lawyer working to sew doubt into the prosecution's case. On top of that, Mason Verger knows that Will has helped Margot Verger flee the country. And Jack Crawford hasn't let go of Will's retracted belief that Hannibal is the real Chesapeake Ripper.

As Will and Hannibal's mental link deepens, they must carefully manipulate their allies and their reputations to avoid drawing attention to their less legal hobbies and keep their family safe.


Notes

Hello! I hadn't planned for this to take as long as it did, but it was worth it because I am quite pleased with how this is coming along so far! Happy Friday the 13th and happy 3rd anniversary of the first time I watched Hannibal! I have the next two chapters mostly complete and the plan for the final chapter and epilogue solidified. Once again, the fic title is from a Four Eyes song, specifically Magic 8 Ball. The title is from the Four Eyes song of the same title.

See the end of the work for more notes

# I Bend

Very quickly, Will and Hannibal developed a means of communicating mentally. It was, of course, nothing as efficient as actually reading the other's thoughts. But leaving letters containing the memory of messages ranging from plans for dates to information regarding the progression of Chilton's trial was a relatively quick and easy means of communicating privately and instantaneously.

Hannibal came up with it. He had left a bloody, human heart on the pew they often sit and talk on, in the chapel of his mind palace. When Will poked it, a memory of a young Hannibal, likely in Florence based on his age and the general, old-world feel of the architecture, preparing dinner for himself. The scene flickered and the Florentine kitchen was replaced by a dining table, Hannibal sitting at the head seat alone.

*I was alone before you, unknown and unseen,* the memory told him. Will could practically hear Hannibal's voice, such blatant intent behind the memory. The memory faded and he finally noticed the red rose lying a few feet away on the same pew.

Touching it doesn't summon any memories, at least nothing that Will can see, so he's startled when he hears Hannibal's voice just in front of him, seeming almost to come *from* the rose itself.

*Will, my darling,* the rose murmurs, *I could not reach you earlier so I have decided to experiment. I wanted to let you know that Mason Verger has reached out for therapy sessions. I cannot send him away without raising suspicion, and keeping him close might be the best way to monitor his movements. If this communication method works, please let me know as soon as possible. It may become quite effective, especially in our game with Mason.*

Since Hannibal's method behind sending the mental voice message was rather straightforward, Will quickly picked up on how to send them back. The most difficult aspect of the whole affair was learning how to alter Hannibal's mind palace, but once he managed to create his first 'memory' it clicked and he could create them nearly instantaneously.

Will now also finds the occasional memory of Hannibal's having meandered its way down his stream alongside his own thoughts and memories. Each day their mental bond grows and

Will is often filled with vicious glee at the knowledge that they're entwined in a way that no one else will ever be. No temporary fling will bring Alana the connectedness that Will has with Hannibal without trying. No half-truth-laden therapy sessions could make Bedelia du Maurier see Hannibal the way Will does with his eyes closed.

Suppose Will wasn't so intimately aware of every moment that Hannibal felt jealous of the attention others stole from Will. In that case, he might feel embarrassed about how petty he gets when thinking of Hannibal's relationship with the two women. But he knows that Hannibal was so bitter about Will kissing Alana that he tried to have them both killed at different points in time. He felt Hannibal's bone-deep relief after finding out about Will's survival, and how that same feeling never extended to Alana, even in the slightest. So a touch of vindictive glee at having Hannibal all to himself is nothing, for them.

On the way to Peter's, sitting in the passenger seat of Bev's car as she drives them to the farm, he slips into Hannibal's mind palace once more. A quick scan alerts him to the bouquet of rhododendrons left in their typical meeting place. At Hannibal's not-so-subtle nonverbal request, Will's been refamiliarizing himself with the language of flowers.

His fingers graze the light pink buds as he considers the inclusion of the leaves, the most poisonous part of the plant. Danger, or caution, then. Hannibal's voice fills the air around him.

*"Hello, dearest. It seems as though our good friend Frederick has escaped police captivity. The guards assigned to monitor him left him out of their sight and he appears to have stolen a car and vanished. Stay on the lookout, he may well be upset at your betrayal.*

*Should you be available for dinner, let me know soon. I have enough produce left to spare you a serving and I can never say no to the opportunity to have you grace my table."*

Will leaves a bundle of Kalmia angustifolia in place of the rhododendron. Sheep's Laurel, known for being particularly poisonous to sheep, should send the message clearly enough. Will is not to be trifled with, and if Frederick thinks he can threaten him then he'll regret ever escaping in the first place.

He also leaves a memory-message letting Hannibal know to expect him for dinner. After that's finished, he blinks back to reality. According to Bev's dashboard clock, only about a

minute has passed. He wishes he hadn't left his car at Quantico, missing the familiarity of the surroundings, but he needed Bev here and she offered.

Peter's barn creeps up over the horizon as Bev's car trundles on. As the engine shuts off, the cacophony of Peter's animal companions rises and ebbs in their enthusiasm.

Peter peers out from the barn, head tilted in a facsimile of eye contact. "He-hello, Will. This-this must be your friend."

Will nods. "And that must be your friend," he says, gesturing to the rat perched on his shoulder. Its long tail drapes around his neck like an open scarf and its little hands cling to his shirt when he moves.

"This is, this is Kevin. I found him." Peter grins as the rat scurries across his shoulder and jumps into his waiting hands.

Bev cracks a smile. "I always wanted a pet rat but my parents wouldn't let me as a kid. My younger brother woulda been too freaked out."

"Why not-not now?" Peter doesn't look up at her, only petting the rat curled up in his other hand.

Bev inches closer, hand out to ask permission to pet Kevin. Peter takes hold of her fingers and shows her how to scratch the rat's ears. It burrows itself deeper into her touch. "Never really knew if I'd be good at it, I suppose." Her voice is soft, her eyes wide as Kevin chitters happily.

"O-only learn if you try. You stopped by for a reason."

Will nods, though he isn't certain if Peter sees it. "We know you didn't kill Sarah Craber. Or any of the other women. But Clark Ingram is in a position where his word is valued more than yours. If the case goes to court, I can't guarantee you won't go to prison. Not with the lack of evidence in your favor."

“I-I know. Been finding people to-to take in the animals if so. I-I-I’ve got you now, though. Less worried about a worst-case scenario. Would you want to w-watch Kevin for me, Bev? If-if your help isn’t enough. He doesn’t have a home to go to, just… just me.” Peter leads them to a medium-sized cage with two other rats in it, sleeping. He undoes the latch and lifts Kevin into the cage. The rat snuggles up to the other two and joins the pile.

Bev shakes her head. “No, Peter, that won’t be necessary. We have a plan. Ingram isn’t stupid, but he is impulsive, to some degree. We think he’s going to come for you soon. If… *When* he does, you’re going to call Will. He’ll take you to his house to stay while we send someone to look for him. He can’t run forever, especially with evidence of his aggressive tendencies.”

Peter stands facing the cage, his back still to them. He breathes in deeply then shakes his head. “I-I trust you. I’ll call.”

~

When Will gets home there’s another car in his driveway. It’s not one he recognizes. He treads lightly to the door, though he suspects his guest heard him pull up, especially if they’re on the first floor.

Behind the front door, he can hear his dogs barking, though farther off like they’re not in the living room.

The door is unlocked, and Will can faintly see scratches on the door where a shaky hand picked the lock. He twists the handle slowly and makes his way inside.

Nothing is out of place, from what he can tell at a glance. As he walks further into the house, he can hear the shower running upstairs. Before he reaches the top step, the water cuts off.

Will finds his dogs crowded around the bathroom door in the primary bedroom, most lying on the floor until they notice Will. Buster excitedly darts back and forth between the

bathroom door and Will, following him as he makes his way to sit on the spare bed.

An unreasonable amount of time passes before the bathroom door opens to reveal Frederick Chilton in a shirt and pajama pants that are obviously pilfered from Will's drawers. The scruff that constituted the beginnings of his prison beard has been shaved and his hair is slicked back using some of Will's gel.

He freezes when he catches sight of Will, his hand still floofing the drying strands of his hair. He clears his throat. "Ah, you're finally here. Did you know? That I'd be his patsy, I mean." Jerking back into motion, Chilton smoothes his shirt and puts his socks back on.

Will blinks at the bluntness—to be expected, but annoying nonetheless. *Rude* . The thought sounds so much like Hannibal he has to blink again to refocus on the movement around him.

"You escaped police captivity and broke into my house for an interrogation?"

Chilton huffs as he storms down the stairs and into the kitchen. "Of course! You're the only one I can be certain isn't falling for his tricks! You've got to tell them they've got the wrong man!"

Will closes the cabinets one after the other as Chilton flings them open in his search. He scowls as the other man tosses another cabinet door open, moves a couple of old boxes of cereals, and flits to the next drawer. "If I'd known, I wouldn't have planned a long-con to imprison him. What the *hell* are you looking for?"

"Bugs! Cameras, recording devices, *et cetera.* He could be monitoring your every move and we would never have noticed if I hadn't shown up!"

His shrieking is giving Will a headache. His brow furrows as he presses his fingers into each side of the bridge of his nose. "I know what listening devices look like. And there are none between the cans of corn."

The kitchen grows quiet as Chilton freezes. “Of course not, I was merely being thorough. Did you know that he killed three officers in my house before he sic’d the Feds on me? Three! I have to flee the country.”

“There’s an APB on you right now. Your photo is being sent to airports, border checkpoints, and harbors. You didn’t even consider that, did you?”

“You’re the Fed, not me!”

Will steps back, sighing as he rubs his eyes and spins in a circle. When he opens his eyes again, he drops the facade and says, “It’s too easy. *You’re* too easy to torment. You’d run right back into prison and for what? Because you couldn’t plan accordingly? Because you’re too stupid to not burn bridges?”

Chilton pales. “Wh-What on earth does that mean?”

The gravel outside crackles beneath tires. Will leans forward. “I knew you’d come here for help. Cavalry’s here,” he whispers, shrugging.

A car door slams and the sound sends Chilton scrambling for the back door. Will clears the space between him and the living room in a few long steps and opens the front door for Jack.

Jack’s eyes gloss over him as he scans the living room. “He really come here?”

Will sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Why’d you come alone, Jack?”

“He is here, then. Out back?”

The back door slams shut with just enough force to be heard where they’re standing. Jack’s head snaps in that direction and he pushes past Will with a single-minded focus.

“Jack, arresting him—or worse—won’t undo the damage done to Miriam Lass.”

Jack freezes, hands clenching at his sides. His fingers twitch toward the holster at his hip and he doesn’t look at Will when he speaks. “It’ll stop him from inflicting any more.”

With that, he continues on. Will follows behind and keeps the dogs from scrambling out after Jack as he pursues Chilton at a slow, steady pace. He barely spares a glance for the conflict; he doesn’t care about what exactly Jack chooses to do to Chilton as long as it stops him from being a nuisance for Will.

A single gunshot echoes through the winter air, Chilton’s shout ringing out after.

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Hannibal’s front door, like usual, is unlocked when Will lets himself into his partner’s house. The final rays of the evening’s light chase his heels as he meanders from room to room. He finds Hannibal in the Study, rewriting his notes from work.

Though Will’s steps are nigh silent on the thick rug beneath his feet, Hannibal looks up before he finishes walking through the doorway.

“I much prefer your natural scent now that you’ve abandoned that horrible aftershave,” he teases.

Will shrugs, sitting in the lounge seat that faces the desk. “I couldn’t stand it when I smelled it in your memories.”

“The man it came with made it more tolerable. To what do I owe the pleasure of your presence?”

“Chilton’s been caught.”

Hannibal’s gaze drops to Will’s lips and he mirrors his smirk. “Meddling again, darling?”

“Only the bare minimum. He walked right into my trap. Broke in. Used my shower while I was out. Before that, I was going to put up more of a fight against Jack but he loves to push buttons.”

Hannibal clicks his tongue, setting down his pen and closing his notebook with a gentle thud. “Tasteless. One less pig on the streets.”

Will has to look away from Hannibal’s cheeky grin for fear of bursting out laughing. Hannibal never emotes much if not alone with him, and when he does it’s still rather subtle. Whenever Will picks up his emotions, though, they always feel so intense. He wonders sometimes how Hannibal maintains such an unshakeable mask when he deals with such full-bodied emotions.

"Not enough gone," he mumbles. It feels odd to voice the thought aloud still, but the way Hannibal stands up just to cup his face in his hand comforts him and dissipates any lingering guilt.

He looks up into Hannibal's brown eyes and leans into the touch. "Will you show me your basement? The one you use for your kills?"

Though Hannibal's face remains unchanged, his hand tremors slightly. He withdraws before Will can comment on it, but eventually, he nods. "Would you like me to show you now?"

"If you're not busy."

Hannibal shakes his head and offers a hand for Will to take.

He accepts, allowing him to lift him from the seat and into his arms for a brief embrace before Hannibal pulls away.

He leads him through the kitchen and into his pantry. Near the back, where a few wine racks stand tall, he kneels and finds an invisible seam in the paneling where he easily hefts the heavy-looking door up. The metal legs prop it up as they descend and Will makes sure to tug them out of place so it slides gently back into the floor above them.

They're consumed by darkness for a moment until Hannibal's solid footsteps change in pitch like he's standing on cement rather than the wood of the stairs now. A row of lights clicks on overhead a moment later and Will blinks at the sudden change.

It's very clinical; sterile, gleaming metal surgical tools sit in neat little rows and well-dusted tables line pristine floors. Several meat hooks hang from the ceiling near the middle, surrounding a drain that the ground gently slopes toward. Near the back, a stainless steel fridge sits, the same model as the one upstairs. To the left lies what looks to be a table saw.

Will meanders toward one of the exam tables in the center of the room. He trails his fingers over the edge of it, just high enough to refrain from touching it.

"Clark Ingram is a pig. One the world would benefit from losing." His voice feels trapped in his throat, the words seeping from him like molasses from a pipe.

"What do you want from him?" Hannibal's voice chimes from directly behind him, though he does not reach out to touch Will.

"I want him dead," Will whispers.

"What are his crimes, Will? What must he absolve himself of through death?"

"He's a wretched, pathetic thing. He's ruining something good, he's ruining Peter. Dragging his name through the mud. Peter is selfless, he doesn't deserve this, doesn't deserve to be

punished for something he didn't do. Ingram was supposed to help him, but he's punishing him for his goodness."

"And what are you, Will? Do you share this goodness with Peter?"

"Whether I do or not doesn't matter. I am… Inevitable. I will deliver upon him death. We will. Together. I will guide you, and you will guide me, and united we can burn our enemies."

"As God does?" Finally, Hannibal circles around him. He stands mere inches apart, cradling Will's face like it's the most precious thing in the world.

"If you believe in Him. But God acts alone."

"With the might of gods, our whims dictate life and death. Do you want Ingram to die because you see Peter as another of your strays?"

Will smiles, his arms circling Hannibal's waist. He doesn't know when he started but he notices that he's swaying, back and forth, side to side with just enough force to pull Hannibal along with him. "I collect them, don't I? My dogs, Abigail, and Peter. You. My collection of lost things. Creatures I protect and allow to grow under my watch."

He knows it's not the healthiest mindset but Hannibal never cared about these dangerous mindsets of his. If the crinkle in the corners of his eyes is anything to go by, he actively enjoys the thought of being protected and nurtured by Will.

"He's threatened one of your pack, and now you must re-establish your claim."

"I'm not a dog, Hannibal." Will squeezes his waist in a warning.

"And I am not implying that you are. You demand bloodshed, a more animalistic desire than polite society would have you believe we are capable of. Of all the animals humanity has

fooled itself into believing we've domesticated, our fellow man is the most dangerous to let our guard down around. We are animals, yes, but our level of cognition allows us violence that cannot be matched.

"Base, but not degrading in its purity; untempered and unfiltered, your desires seep out your pores. The tight grip you had on your deeper desires is slipping. You'd be disgusted by the thought mere months ago. How you've changed." His smile is impish but the warmth in his eyes shows how proud of Will he is.

"I believe in you. I believe in us. I didn't, for a while. I thought that there was nothing uglier than what I wanted, the thoughts that lurked in my head. I used to dread falling asleep because I'd dream of gore and yearn for it. But now, I dream of us. Of the family that I never allowed myself to want for fear of ruining it."

Hannibal's eyes flicker across his face, studying him. Will knows he's memorizing this moment to recreate on paper, later. "I will not break, Will. That knowledge tempers any fears you could have before they appear. I fear you; the one thing alive that could destroy me. This fear is novel, and in its peculiarity, I am drawn unresistingly to you."

Will smiles at him. "You are faced with fear for the first time in a long time, and I have been freed from mine. Identically different, we are."

He steps back and clears his throat. "Let's get out of this basement. I suspect Ingram will make his move sooner, rather than later. He knows Peter cares for his animals above all else; he's going to go after them."

Hannibal's brow furrows. "What a detestable man."

Will barks out a laugh. Leave it to Hannibal to be upset by the idea of harm to animals and not bat an eye at plotting a murder.

It takes a day, but soon Peter calls.

His voice is shaky and hushed as he tells Will that he thinks Ingram has snuck into his Sanctuary.

Will heads over.

It should be half an hour's drive, but he makes it in fifteen. Hannibal had been staking out Peter's barn since the night before. They both had, in shifts. He'll whisk Ingram away without leaving anything more than enough evidence to prove Ingram was there.

When Will gets there, he pulls out his phone. He sends Bev a text letting him know he's at Peter's house and that he had just witnessed Ingram fleeing the scene. Then he steps into the barn.

Peter stands over Ingram, a shovel in his trembling hands. Ingram is still at his feet but as Will steps closer he can see the way whisps of mist escape his lips as hot breath clashes with freezing air.

"No more, Peter. We'll take it from here, alright?"

Peter flinches before all the pent-up energy leaches from his body. "Not-not dead. What'll you do?"

"I think you and I both know it's safer for all of us that I don't tell you that. Let's get you out of here. Here," Will says, offering out his hand to take the shovel from him.

It's well-used, with slight indentations from wear in two spots along the handle. Peter will miss this after they get rid of it, but at least he'll be safe.

Will leads him back to the car. "You can turn the radio on if you'd like. I have to call Bev to update her though, so not too loud."

Peter nods, gazing out the window. He fiddles with the AC for a moment before turning the heat to full blast.

Bev answers on the first ring. “Jesus, Will! I thought we agreed that we’d do this together, why did you go without backup?”

“I needed to get here. I’m sorry, I should’ve called when I first left.”

“Damn right, you should’ve!” Bev sighs, hard. “But you’re alright? Peter’s alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s all good here. Peter got a good scare but in the time it took for me to get over here, he chased Ingram off by threatening to call the police. My presence must’ve been the final straw; I saw him disappear into the woods right as I pulled up. I never saw his car so I imagine he left it a good ways away and hiked the distance.”

“I’m still on my way, okay? Just stay there ‘til I can take a statement from the two of you, then head straight home.”

Will grins into the phone. “Yes, mother.”

“Keep that up and I’ll start treating you like a child, you ass. Heading to a potential crime scene without calling for backup.” She grumbles at him more under her breath.

“I really appreciate the help, Bev.”

“It’s what friends are for, yeah? I’m almost there, so look alive, sunshine.”

Bev pulls up not a minute later. Will’s almost surprised to see Price and Zeller pour out of the backseat after her.

“Jack’d be here, but he’s helping Bella with a chemo treatment, so it’s just the science squad today,” Jimmy chirps, all too enthusiastic for a man up at 2 a.m. to track a criminal through the woods.

Zeller, on the other hand, looks like he’s half a second from finding the most comfortable pile of dirt and making it his bed for the next three days. He’s bundled in a comical amount of layers, even for Virginia in the wintertime. “I ‘unno why I have to be here, it’s not like there’re any bodies to examine.”

Bev elbows him hard in the side and he slinks off after Price into the barn. “Ignore him, he goes to bed at 8:30. You guys are all fine?”

“All fine. The-the animals were frightened by-by the commotion,” Peter says, lips pursed.

Bev nods, crossing her arms over her chest. “Makes sense. Zeller’s good with animals, so if any of ‘em are still upset he’ll help them. Are you ready to give your statement?”

Peter nods, heading back to the car to sit down with the warmth on his back. Normally, Will would object to wasting gas by leaving the car running with the door open, but he wants Peter to feel as comfortable as possible after Ingram’s attempted attack.

Bev works quickly to take their statements so they can be on their way.

He drops Peter off at Wolf Trap. “I imagine you’d prefer the company of animals, especially right now. It’s been a stressful night. I have a guest bedroom set up if you want to use that.”

Peter fiddles with his sleeves. “What are your dogs' names again?”

Will grins, exhausted, and sets off explaining which dog has what personality. By the time he’s finished, the last remnants of tension in Peter’s shoulders have leeched from his body and he blinks sleepily at the house.

“I’ll take care of them. I-I have a few days to myself?”

Will nods as he finally leaves the car with Peter dutifully following after him, though he doesn’t turn it off. “Yeah, as long as you need.”

“You tell me when-when he’s dead. I think… I think he deserves to die.”

Will doesn’t follow when Peter slips in after he opens the door. “Yes, but you don’t deserve to be persecuted for killing him. This way, when he’s discovered, you’re ruled out as a suspect immediately. He’s hurt a lot of people. Anyone could’ve done this to him.”

Peter faces the kitchen as he holds his hand out for Will to slip the house key into. “You’re a good friend, Will. Good friend.”

“I’m doing this for selfish reasons, too, Peter. It feels good to do bad things to bad people.”

Peter nods knowingly and herds the few dogs that have wandered outside back indoors. He lifts a hand in a wave as he shuts the door, eyes trained on the floor. Will waits until he hears the deadbolt lock before he heads back to the car.

~

Hannibal’s car is in the driveway when he gets back to his partner’s house, though that doesn’t alert him to whether or not he’s home. He goes to the door to the basement first.

Will knows he’s wanted here, knows that Hannibal showing him this place means that he may come and go as he pleases, but he still finds himself hesitating. There is no undoing this choice once he commits to it.

He breathes in deeply, filling his lungs with the scent of Hannibal, the cold steel of kitchen appliances, and, very faintly, the tang of blood nearly overruled by the bitter scent of the wines that fill the racks surrounding him. His heartbeat is slow, though his hands feel less steady than usual when he hefts the trapdoor from the floor. He's excited. He hopes this will be a good surprise for his partner, and show his commitment.

The light is on, and Will can see that from where he stands on the top step. As he descends, the now-familiar room reveals itself to him. So does Hannibal.

Standing by the nearest medical table to the door, clad in his plastic suit over his pajamas, Hannibal looms over a prone body. Ingram is unconscious, whether from the head wound Peter dealt earlier or from a concoction of drugs that Hannibal dosed him with, Will does not know.

Hannibal glances over his shoulder when Will approaches, eyebrows raised. "I didn't expect to see you here so soon. How is Peter?"

"Mostly fine, now. Coping. I told you that I had a plan."

"Yes, one that you have yet to share with me." His tone is bitter, but Will can see in his eyes a playful look. He's excited to follow Will's whims, rather than his own plots, for once.

Will steps around him to stand on the other side of the table, next to a stand with medical tools laid out on a paper bib. "I told you that you would guide me and I would guide you. But, for now, let's go to bed. Let him think about what he's done."

Hannibal's eyes widen a fraction but before he can say anything, Will is undoing the zipper of his plastic kill suit and peeling it off his shoulders. Hannibal steps out of it dutifully when Will guides him to, and he hangs it up on a hook by the staircase before taking his hand and leading Hannibal back to their bed.

Will snuggles into Hannibal's arms once they've finished getting ready for bed. The grip on his waist is strong and solid, and Will thinks that he might never be able to sleep without it there again.

He finds Hannibal at his stream. He stands barefoot in the water, brown trousers rolled up so they don't get wet. He also rolled the sleeves of the matching brown dress shirt up, showing his handsome forearms.

"What are you up to?"

Hannibal smiles at him. "You are impossible to predict, beloved. I was hoping you might reveal some of your secrets to me here. If I focus on the water, I can follow the current of your thoughts through different moments in time. Though, I loathe to admit that I've not yet mastered your stream; you work so similarly but our differences are stark."

"Hoping to find out about my plans for Ingram behind my back?"

"Of course not," Hannibal admits. "You're here with me now, aren't you?"

"Yes, because it's not an invasion of privacy if I'm right here watching you stick your hand in the cookie jar, is it?" Will finally steps away from where he had appeared on the shore, slipping his work boots and socks off to stand beside Hannibal in his stream. The water is cool and gentle trickling against his ankles.

"Is this any more an invasion of privacy than your nightly exploration of my mind palace without my knowing?" Hannibal teasingly nudges him with his elbow before pointing at the ripples in the stream right in front of them.

In the water, distorted by the motion of the surface, a memory appears. From a first-person view, Will's hands grip the bars of his cell in the BSHCI. Hannibal stands in front of him, early on in his imprisonment. Will can tell, because over the gentle trickle of the stream none of his words come through, only the rush of Will's blood in his ears.

The hands tighten their grip on the bars, fingers flexing and knuckles whitening with the force. The Will of the memory is suddenly on top of Hannibal from the memory, bars having vanished.

Memory Will straddles his waist as he wraps his hands around Hannibal's throat with the same force he once used on the cell bars. Hannibal's face reddens, then purples as time goes on and his body instinctually twitches to try and wriggle him off, though his hands never move to interfere with his grip. Hannibal's lips twitch into a smile.

Memory Will blinks, and everything returns to as it had been before the fantasy began. Hannibal talks, but Will doesn't listen, and his hands squeeze the bars of the cell even tighter. A fish flits to the surface and with a flick of its tail, the memory is dispelled from the water.

"You used to imagine killing me." Will doesn't need to glance over to see the besotted, nearly gleeful look on Hannibal's face. He can imagine it perfectly anyway.

"Yes."

"Always with your hands?"

Will shakes his head, too-long curls flopping in his eyes. "After I got over my fear of the intimacy of it all. I used to hide behind a gun."

"Guns allow you to initiate an action, never to finish it. You wanted a more hands-on approach?"

"The anger I felt toward you was deserving of a level of intimacy that a gun never provided. I needed to feel you die, not just see it."

Hannibal turns to look at Will then, though Will does not meet his gaze. "And do you still imagine killing me?"

Will stands in silence for a moment, contemplating. He wants to be completely honest when he answers, certain of where they stand. "No. Now when there are so many other interesting

things I could do to you with my hands."

Hannibal is about to step forward, maybe to pull him into a kiss, maybe to tackle him to the shore, Will isn't certain which. He knows he'd follow along. Before Hannibal can, more movement flickers in the stream in front of them.

Again, a first-person view appears, this time of Hannibal's basement from the night Hannibal showed it to him. Will glances at a medical table as Hannibal speaks, and briefly, the image of Ingram laid on the table flickers to life. His jaw hangs open as though mid-scream, but his eyes are cloudy in death. His shirt has been unbuttoned and a y-incision peels the flesh of his torso from his ribs. The ribs themselves have been severed at the sternum and popped out of place, blooming outward like gruesome petals. He vanishes in a moment.

Will's head turns, and he mumbles a response to Hannibal as his gaze follows him when he shifts to stand in front of him. Again, the scene flickers, jumps to a moment a little earlier in the imagined scenario, and Hannibal's arms now are wrapping around him, blood-stained and guiding Will's own hands as he takes a bone saw to Ingram's sternum. A scream starts just as the image fades again.

The rest of the night proceeds as it had happened, and Hannibal sighs. "I suppose I should be thankful I get that much. You don't like sharing when your plans aren't ready to be enacted."

"No one likes a rushed performance."

Hannibal chuckles, eyes crinkling as he smiles at Will. His hands reach up to cup his face as he steps closer, the movement disturbing the final moments of the memory. It vanishes as Hannibal gently guides the overgrown locks of hair from Will's forehead. It's long enough that he can tuck the sides behind his ears.

"I eagerly await the day I may read the script."

"As one of the leading roles, I suppose I can give away this much. We need to wait long enough before acting so that all suspicion falls from Peter."

Hannibal glances away, nodding.

He stays silent so long that Will's curiosity overtakes him. "What are you thinking about?"

"Death, and control."

How you control death through your 'acts of God'?"

Hannibal glances at him again, though he cannot manage to maintain eye contact for longer than a moment. "How an individual's last means of exerting control of their life comes after they die. The stories a corpse holds, the information certain individuals can pry from dead lips."

"Autopsies, then." Hannibal's sudden change in the topic seems disconnected, and Will takes joy in unraveling the yarn to find how it connects, and where Hannibal wishes to lead him in his mind.

"Yes. Most are conducted when the cause of death is questioned and when the why behind it all needs to be definitively stated, rather than implied. When someone is killed, a medical examiner hopes to reveal information that may lead to the murderer, but some corpses are so thoroughly twisted to the whims of a stronger mind that they may never reveal such secrets."

Will's gaze flickers over Hannibal's face. He seems almost hopeful, though he's closed off enough that he can't decipher what he's thinking entirely. "You're very twisty. Your corpses only ever express what you want them to, often something that the dead did not wish to reveal. Bad habits, unsavory tastes, the disgraceful sides that all of us try to hide but some of us fail to fully enough. And then, you prove your might by turning that ugliness into something physically beautiful. You make art, and in doing so erase the last hint of control an individual tries to exert on the world."

"I wonder what it will look like when you remove this control from Clark Ingram. Whatever you decide I do, I can only imagine the beauty will rival that of the most skilled artists in the

world. Greater than Rembrandt, Michelangelo, or even Botticelli."

Though he still can't look directly at Will, Hannibal's eyes are filled with such pure adoration that Will forces himself awake. As soon as he does, he groggily blinks, and rolls over, still in Hannibal's arms.

He pokes Hannibal awake when he does. At the first sign of those maroon-brown eyes peering out behind pale eyelashes, Will tucks Hannibal's head into his chest. Petting his hair, Will says "I love you, more than anything in this world, Hannibal. But Ingram is my kill. You can show me how to display Ingram in a way that's befitting of his crimes, but I have the final say, I make the final cuts."

Hannibal's voice is muffled by Will's sleep shirt. "I was under the impression that your intention with Ingram was to have me display him."

"You assumed wrong. I'm in control here, you're merely a guiding hand. He's my kill, I just want you there with me when I do it."

Hannibal lifts his head to press a gentle kiss on Will's brow. When he pulls back, it's only to tug Will closer to him, like if he applies enough force their innards will fuse, their bones will interlock, and their souls will become indistinguishable from each other.

"I never would have predicted, in all my years, that I could be so lucky as to have you in my life. We are inseparable, Will Graham. You're in my head, and I in yours, and you have replaced my lonely heart with something greater than any god could craft with their own hands. Whatever you ask of me, I will show you, I will give you. You clever, incorrigible boy, I could not blame you for seeking to further our bond as you seek to."

"Then you'll do as I say, follow my word to the letter?"

"Always," Hannibal sighs, tilting his head to take Will's lips in a sweet, slow kiss.

# There's A Bright Light Guiding You Home to Me

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal fuck Ingram up

Chapter Notes

Hello again! Just as a warning, there are discussions of both Mason Verger in this chapter and horrific acts of violence that only technically appear offscreen! Yay!!! Chapter title from Bright Light by Four Eyes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mid-afternoon the day after Peter's call, Will is mindlessly wandering the halls of Hannibal's mind palace when he opens the patient exit of Hannibal's office. It leads to a long, unfamiliar hallway lined with a few dozen doors. Each door is different, with few decorations that differentiate them from the next.

One is obviously related to Will. His drawing of a clock is carefully carved into the center of the door, with the center of the oval where the hands would attach to a regular clock instead of being a peephole. Despite standing on the wrong side of the door, when he leans in he can see inside. It's another copy of Hannibal's office, littered with what Will knows are little visual associations with particular memories.

On the floor in front of the chaise, Will's sachel lays where he tossed it on the floor the day he bought Abigail a Christmas present. The scalpel that Will fidgeted with during their first conversation about Randall Tier sits on the desk, at the exact misaligned angle that he had set it down at. Will also notes the used cotton ball he used to dab at Hannibal's wounds after Budge's attacks.

Will hums and moves deeper down the hallway. The next door is much plainer, with only a few simple daisies carved into the edges of the frame. He doesn't recognize any of the loose details in the room and doesn't have any interest in watching Hannibal's regular therapy sessions, so he moves on.

The next door that he approaches is across the hall from his door and several rooms down. He only takes note of it because of the short knife stuck to the hilt into a seemingly random spot in the door near his waist. When he inspects it in more detail, the brass handle is formed into an intricately-made hog head.

The peephole doesn't reveal any obvious details so he tries the handle. It twists under his hand so he slips in the room. Will startles when, not far from the door but just out of view from outside, his eyes land on Hannibal's back, standing by one of the chairs.

Hannibal wears the same suit Will saw him leave for work in, a handsome dark green with black patterning. He turns around a moment after Will opens the door, face breaking out into a gentle smile as he does.

His hands fidget with a copy of the same knife that's embedded in the door. “Mason stopped by for an appointment. He's defaced my chair,” Hannibal says, sounding exceedingly worn out considering Hannibal's been at work for only a few hours.

As he mentioned, an inch-long slice in the leather interrupts the otherwise pristine armrest of the chair only a few inches below Hannibal's fingertips.

“He suspects that I know about your involvement in Margot's disappearance, primarily concerning my being her therapist. I reminded him, again, that as another of my patients, I cannot discuss the specifics of Margot's therapy. He is beginning to follow our connection as another route to getting the information he desires. I am certain he's had someone follow you to my house, and vice versa, at least a handful of times.”

Will nods, slipping his hands into his pockets and turning to face the other half of the office. “I've noticed them once or twice. I've got a few ideas on how I might be able to use that to my advantage, but I don't want to rush into anything yet.”

Hannibal's footsteps follow him as Will begins pacing back and forth in front of the wall of bookshelves. “Do you believe he is aware of the extent of our less legal hobbies?” he asks.

Will shakes his head. “He's only recently sent people to follow me around, as far as I can tell. If he thinks either of us is capable of anything, it's most likely forgery of legal documents and the like,” Will says.

Hannibal wraps his arms around Will and Will can feel him dip his head in agreement before burying his face in Will's hair. Unsurprisingly, Will can feel his chest rise as he inhales deeply. As he chuckles, he can hear Hannibal's slow exhale morph into a matching laugh.

They stay like that for another moment before Hannibal pulls away with a sigh. “Unfortunately, I have another patient coming in soon. I must leave soon, but will you be able to join me for dinner tonight again?”

“If you're cooking, I'll be there. Seriously though, the best thing to come out of being sent to the BSHCI is that I've finally got something that has convinced both me and Jack to pay attention to my limits. I don't have any plans this afternoon unless a serial killer starts serial killing enough to warrant my interest,” Will says, playfully hip-checking Hannibal as he walks past.

Hannibal strokes a hand down Will's shoulder to his elbow and leaves his hand there. “I'll see you at seven, then. I love you, Will.”

“I love you too.”

Hannibal smiles once more before vanishing. After he's gone, Will wanders over to the mutilated chair. Mason Verger's voice sneers from the space in front of him, giving the illusion of coming from the cut itself. Will grimaces and exits the mind palace. He peeks out the blinds to check for any of Mason's lackeys, nodding to himself when he sees nothing. He turns around and heads for the shower to prepare for his dinner with Hannibal.

~

Two days later, Bev texts to let Will know that she’s swinging by Wolf Trap to hang out with Peter and Kevin. Will lets her know that he won’t be there, but that he hopes she enjoys learning how to take care of the rat.

She sends back a string of emojis he can't decipher the meaning of, and a photo of Kevin where the camera is so close his whiskers blur and his nose takes up half his screen.

He gathers Hannibal from his study and tugs him down into the basement.

Hannibal chuckles at his excitement. "Darling, he isn't going anywhere. Not unless you choose it, at least. There's no need to rush."

"It's a risk, not having at least one of us there with Beverly. It clears Peter, but she's smart. She knows I hate Ingram." Will hates to admit it and he knows Hannibal's already considered it.

Hannibal leads the way as they descend the stairs. He flicks the light on, illuminating Ingram's prone form. "That's true, but she cares for you. She doesn't want to believe what she knows deep down is true. That disbelief can go surprisingly far, in situations like these."

"Let's hope it gets us enough warning to flee the country if she gets too suspicious."

Ingram is asleep, but he jerks awake when Will flicks him in the center of his forehead. Groggily, he blinks up at them for a moment before recognition sets in.

"Up and at 'em. No time for sleeping, we've got big plans for you." Will smiles mockingly at him.

"Officer," Ingram splutters, "please! You have to help-"

Will clicks his tongue, the same warning sound he uses to calm his dogs. "I'm not an officer. And I'm not here to help. But I think we both know you know why I'm here. See, you have a nasty habit of assuming you're the most important person in the room, and that everyone who

doesn’t give you the ‘proper’ attention,” he emphasizes his point with finger quotes, pleased when Ingram flinches at the movement, “needs to be punished.”

Hannibal chimes in from behind him. “That’s why you killed all those women. And why you use your position as Peter’s social worker to manipulate him into a position where he would have implicated himself for your crimes. You feel you are above punishment. We are going to show you that you aren’t the most dominant power.”

Ingram whimpers and tugs at the restraints on his wrists and neck. He starts pleading again, nonsense about how they’ve got the wrong man and how he doesn’t deserve this, but Will scoffs and tunes him out.

It feels right, almost perfect, to pick up one of the scalpels on the medical table and, with Hannibal’s guidance, press with shockingly little pressure and watch as the flesh severs beneath the force of his will.

~

The next morning, Will wakes to the sound of distant knocking. It feels so far away that he almost doesn’t wake up, but then the shifting of the body beside him draws him fully to consciousness.

“Hannibal?” He croaks, groggy and disoriented in the good way that only comes from great sleep.

Hannibal says nothing, though Will didn’t expect a verbal response. Instead, he soothes a hand down Will’s shoulder, just enough pressure to let him know that he doesn’t want him getting out of bed.

Will doesn’t, snuggling further into the blankets. He does focus on the near-silent padding of Hannibal’s footsteps down the hall and to the front door. With the click of the lock and creak of the door, Will strains to hear two voices engaged in muffled speech.

The timbre and volume are familiar enough that he pieces together that it must be Jack at the door, and when he hears the conversation continue after the door closes once more, he groans and forces himself up.

He slips one of Hannibal's sweaters on, warm and dark blue and just a little too broad in the shoulders to fit properly. It smells like Hannibal. He makes his way through the house, pausing before the doorway to listen in on the conversation.

"All night?" Jack's voice is suspicious but Will can hear how much he wants to be proven wrong in the gentleness of his tone.

"Yes," Hannibal confirms, solidifying Will's certainty that Jack is here regarding Ingram's scene.

"Anyone besides you can verify that?"

Will steps out from his hiding spot. "I can, Jack. I was with Hannibal all night. Are you accusing him of something?"

The two of them turn to look his way. Hannibal looks almost comically pleased at the way Will has chosen to reveal their relationship to Jack. Jack hides his surprise well, but to Will, the way his eyes linger on the bruises on his throat revealed by a too-loose sweater is obvious.

"I'm not accusing him of anything. Only asking his whereabouts." His posture is much more relaxed than it had been the moment Will saw him before his interjection.

Hannibal huffs in frustration; Will can see that most of it is fabricated for the sake of their lie, but it's built on a grain of truth. Hannibal *was* frustrated that he was pulled from his bed for Jack's state of mind. "That's not all you were asking."

Before Jack can defend himself, Will speaks again. “Jack, do you honestly think that Hannibal is the Ripper? Now of all times? Now, after you got him? After I’m out of the BSHCI? Where did this even come from?”

Jack sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose. “Baltimore police found Ingram. In a very… *disturbing* state. Despite the evidence to the contrary, I had my suspicions that it was the Ripper’s doing. I tried calling you to see if you wanted to see the scene, but you never picked up.”

Will flushes. While they had spent much of the night setting up Ingram’s display, Will and Hannibal also wasted a good deal of the evening in bed. “I must’ve forgotten to plug my phone in. Is it bad then? Has it been cleaned or can I see it in person?”

Jack shakes his head. “I’ve got photos if you want to look. I need to know if this is the Ripper or if this is some other psychopath running around working at the Ripper’s level.”

*At the Ripper’s level.* That sends a thrill down Will’s spine. It’s one thing to know that you’re collaborating with Baltimore’s most infamous serial killer of the past decade, it’s another to have the display that you set up—with his assistance, but it’s primarily your own handiwork—compared to you by an outsider.

Will nods, crossing his arms. “I’ll give them a look. It’s not the same, but I know the Ripper well, at this point. Hopefully, I can figure it out. I’ll see you at your office at noon.”

Jack nods before turning to face Hannibal fully. “I’m so sorry about this, Doctor Lecter. I guess I just let the Ripper get to me too much. After Will’s incarceration and subsequent release and Chilton’s trial, I lost my faith in my ability to tell friends from foe. I shouldn’t have let blind panic drive me.”

Hannibal rests his hand on Jack’s shoulder as he walks him to the door. “It’s completely understandable, Jack. These have been a troubling few months, I would be more concerned if you were unaffected.”

Jack grumbles another embarrassed apology and bids them farewell. Hannibal shuts the door behind him, turning to grin proudly at Will. His eyes shine with the unfettered affection that he feels for Will and Will relishes in it.

Will shuffles over to him, quickly engulfed in an embrace. Will clutches onto his sweater in one hand, his other gripping his hair tightly as he presses himself into Hannibal. “We should have time for breakfast and a shower before I need to leave.”

“I suppose it’ll have to be a quick breakfast; you’re a menace who can’t keep his hands to himself.”

Will throws his head back as he laughs.

~

*Justice. Penitence. Consequence.*

*Chosen because neither of them saw the cruelty in their betrayals, Ingram is one that Jack will recognize, but Will has kept tabs on Dorothea Hindley for over a year now. One of his neighbors had reported her for leaving her dog, a small border terrier, in the car the summer before his incarceration while she went shopping.*

*The officer who showed up to investigate was her brother. Convinced that she could do no wrong, she got off scot-free. At the time, Will had imagined breaking into her house at night, stealing her dog, and strangling her while she slept. He had only done one of those. Buster now sleeps soundly in his bed with no lingering fears regarding car rides or being left outside, tied to the fence on a rainy night.*

*Now, Will comes for her again. She hasn’t gotten a new dog since Buster’s disappearance, so he doesn’t have to worry about her being woken up by any barking. The severed rope has long since disappeared, but the rusty water bowl still sits in the corner of her yard, filled with dirt disturbed by the wind.*

*He slips through an unlocked window into the living room and makes his way silently to the bedroom. It's a nice, well-maintained house, but as he moves deeper in, dust and mess show themselves. She only cleans the front rooms for appearances, caring for others' opinions of her and little else.*

*She is asleep when Will creeps into her bedroom, though he had seen that when he peered through the crack in the blinds at the window when he had scoped it out for the final time that night. She stays asleep when he injects a paralytic into the vein at the crook of her elbow, but her eyelids flutter open when he hefts her into his arms a few minutes later.*

*She groans, but all she can manage is a faint twitch of her mouth. He can feel her heart racing, but by now there's nothing she can do. He easily slips her into the trunk of the white Nissan he hotwired and stole from a house whose owners are clearly out of town. No lights are on as he glances one last time down the street to either side of the house, and the baseball cap and black scarf wrapped around his lower face should obscure his identity. It's not an affluent neighborhood, so few of the houses have cameras.*

*He gets her to the basement of Hannibal's house, parking the car in the garage. Hannibal helps secure her limbs with padded leather straps. By now, the paralytic is starting to wear off and she weakly tries to wiggle out of their grasp, to no avail.*

*Hannibal leans over her while Will surveys his options of tools. "You must be wondering why you are here. Ms. Hindley, neither of us takes kindly to animal endangerment, and unluckily for you, you've built yourself somewhat of a reputation for negligence. Will here was kind enough to take your dog off of your hands for you, but those who mistreat animals don't often stop at just one."*

*"Let…me…go" she whimpers, her eyes burning with anger, but behind it, overwhelming fear. "I didn't…"*

*"I'll stop you right there, "Will interrupts. "We all know what you've done, you just don't view it as a bad thing. You think you're untouchable, above the creatures you hurt. But you aren't. You think you're superior, but you're just an animal, like everyone else. And even predators get eaten, sometimes. We're the bigger predators here, Ms. Hindley. It's just nature." Will shrugs before lifting the bone saw into her line of sight.*

*As she starts weeping, Will approaches her head. "When I was scared at the doctor's office as a kid, the nurses would comfort me by explaining what they needed to do at each step. So here's what's going to happen; I'm going to cut your brain out of your skull, cut it into thin slices, and fry it. After I've stored your brain in the cooler under the table, we will take your kidneys, your heart, and some prime cuts of meat from your thigh. By that point, you'll be long dead, but we were never going to keep you alive long anyway."*

*As he spoke, Hannibal had taken the liberty to prepare her for the first incision. A strap across her forehead and an alcohol wipe across the targetted area. Once he's finished, he steps back to give Will room to work. To be trusted so wholly with a task that, before now, Hannibal had only ever worked alone on has Will stepping towards him before he catches himself.*

*He settles for nodding his thanks across the table at him. The softening of the corners of Hannibal's eyes tells him that his meaning was understood. He clears his throat and turns the bone saw on, brows furrowing in his focus.*

~

The photographs don't do the scene justice. He compares them to his memories of the final product, the way the moonlight highlights the gleaming gold-dipped halo of bone above Dorothea Hindley's head and the intensity of the colors lost in translation. The cloth seems dull, the bruising of death prominent but not enunciated by the lighting, and the metallic tang of tin and earthy scents of resin and oil don't flood the senses as they did in the park walkway the scene was presented in.

Two individuals stand, one wrapped around the other in an embrace. A man and a woman, the man leaning up to kiss her in false supplication. The woman's skull sawed open, the space revealing a bouquet in place of her brain. The part of her skull that had been severed floats delicately higher above, removed of all flesh and hair, painted gold, and angled as a disk behind her head. Her face is relaxed in death, staring with an empty gaze into the eyes of her companion.

The man is situated lower on the slight hill the pair are positioned on, the scene frozen in time as he moves to kiss her. A gold cloak hides his body from onlookers. Despite the seemingly passionate embrace, his face has been molded into a look of distant pleasure, not from the greeting but from the meaning behind it.

“It’s a depiction of *The Arrest of Christ,* specifically the fresco by Giotto di Bondone. The moment Judas’ betrayal is revealed to Jesus in the form of a kiss to inform soldiers of his identity. The woman matches Ingram’s victim profile well enough. Do we know who she is?”

Jack leans back in his chair, flipping through a file he grabs from his side of the desk. “Dorothea Hindley, 33, no criminal record, no seeming connection to Ingram. What the hell does it mean, Will?”

Will purses his lips as he glances between the photos strewn across Jack’s desk. He taps Ingram’s face in a closeup photo with the two of them in clear view. “Ingram is the betrayer, his position allows him a level of trust, one which he betrays for his own selfish desires. Since Hindley is a stand-in for Jesus, she could represent the innocence of his victims overall, or, more likely, she was just as innocent and the killer used her to emphasize Ingram’s betrayal. The visual focus is on Ingram, see? He’s in the center of the space, with Hindley slightly to the left. I don’t think that was unintentional.”

It wasn’t, of course, but Jack doesn’t need to know that’s because the act of betrayal is the thematic focus, rather than Ingram’s posed betrayals. They’re both guilty, but letting Jack in on that fact gives him cause to search further into Hindley’s life, and that gets too close for Will to allow the truth through.

“Organs removed? Besides the brain.”

“Yeah, Hindley’s kidneys and brain, Ingram’s intestines, and both of their hearts. And a chunk of her thigh.”

Will squints at a closeup of the open chasm of Hindley’s skull. “The removal of the skull doesn’t seem precise. What’re the flowers?”

“Price says they’re a mix of black dahlias, monkshood, butterfly weed, and a few thorny black roses. The overall message is betrayal, disdain, and death. We’re looking into any purchases from florists in the surrounding states containing these.”

Will gathers up the photos, sliding them back into place in their file. “This isn’t the Ripper, Jack. It’s similar, I’ll give you that. Unnervingly so, in some ways. Organ harvesting, elaborate displays, references to artworks. But the cuts aren’t *clean enough,* the identities of the victims are directly related to *how* they are displayed…” he trails off.

Jack nods, sighing. “It’s someone who knew Ingram, or one of his victims. This is personal, isn’t it?”

Will stares at the photo of the bone halo above Hindley. “Yes. Deeply. The best place to start might be the family of one of his victims since he doesn’t have much of a social circle. Though one of his coworkers could have felt enough betrayal to do this, I think that might be a dead end.”

“This was personal for you; do you feel like you’re getting too close? I know you wanted him caught.”

Will glances at Jack. He looks concerned, in his own way. He struggles to decide whether it’s best to keep Will at a distance or to let him decide where his limits are. Now, though, Jack is noticeably leaning toward keeping an extra eye on him, his gaze tracking Will’s posture, where his eyes focus on. Jack is afraid.

He was shaken by what happened to Miriam, but it was easy to place the blame on the Ripper, at least logically. His guilt surrounding Will, on the other hand, rests entirely on his shoulders, in Jack’s mind. The wound is fresh, still oozing blood and gaping wide. Should Jack ever find out about Will’s betrayal, it would wreck him.

For now, he’s locked in place by Bella’s declining health, but if— *when* —he finds out that Will has joined forces with the Ripper, he’ll be sent adrift, lost in the sea of his guilt and desperation for justice.

So, he plays along. He doesn’t allow his gaze to linger too long, to give away how proud of their creation he is. He keeps his shoulders straight and abandons the less confident mask he wears. He shakes his head. “It’s frustrating, but I’m glad he can’t hurt anyone else. And this new killer isn’t as precise as the Ripper, maybe he’ll slip up sooner. We’ll catch him, Jack.”

Jack sighs but sends him a thankful grin. “I’ll check in with Beverly to see if they’ve found anything else in the lab.”

Chapter End Notes

Dorothea Hindley is named after Dorothea Puente, a serial killer who ran a boarding home where she found her victims, often elderly men and drug addicts, whom she killed and robbed. The last name comes from Myra Hindley, famous in the UK as being one-half of the Moors murderers of the 60s. She and her partner killed 5 children and teens and buried them in the Manchester Moors. See you next Friday :^>

End Notes

I've got midterm papers due this week but hopefully after that I'll be a bit more free so hopefully I can get this fully uploaded by Halloween, but I also am hopeful that I can finish another spooky fic or two this month. Who knows, but I'll definitely have the next chapter up by next Friday, I prommy

My life is so fuckin weird rn I won't even lie. I had a steady job and a secondary job through my university that I got extra hours with every once in a while, then by boss for Steady Job texted last Saturday and said surprise! Even though we opened in April I have decided to close shop permanently! Do not come in for your Sunday shift!

So now I have to apply to jobs again or else I'll run out of savings and not be able to pay rent. Because of the having to search for jobs thing, I have no clue how much time I'll have to spend writing BUT I love distractions so I will see you soon :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!